

Our Holiday Greeting

Supplement to the Shiner Gazette

Christmas, 1906.

SHINER, TEXAS, DECEMBER 19, 1906.

New Year, 1907.

ALONE AT CHRISTMASTIME

By S. BARING-GOULD

Is there—can there be—a man more lonely than one returned from a far country, who has been out of his home land for 20 years, and comes back when his parents are dead, his old friends dispersed, and the old nest has passed to other occupants? And can his loneliness be more emphasized than when his return synchronizes with Christmas?

That was my condition when I revisited the mother country. With a beating heart and straining eyes I had looked for the first sight of dear old America after having left it as a lad, hardly a man, some 20 years ago.

I was back—not to home—I had no home now. My heart began to fail me, my spirits decline, when I reached the little country town near which I had been born, and where I had fleet-ed the golden hours of childhood. No one knew me. In the churchyard I laid a wreath on the graves where lay dear old father and mother. I looked at our house. It had been rebuilt and was occupied by strangers. I went through the village. The little shops had fresh names over them. The old rector who had baptized me was dead. The old school was gone.



"You Are Very Good."

The ancient church had been renovated. The village inn was in new hands. The old Christmas was no more. No frost, no snow, no icicles; only sludge and a drizzling rain.

I returned from my visit to the village in deep depression. I would haste to the rooms I had taken in a house in the town, and spend my Christmas Eve with my pipe and glass—alone, with not even an old dog to lie at my feet and look up with speaking eyes into my face and sympathize with me in my solitude. I would pass the evening before the fire, looking into the red coals, not building castles among them, but watching the tumbling down of old cottages, old farms, old reminiscences, into ash.

I had done well in the other land, and had returned, not a rich man, but with a competence.

It had been my wish, my ambition, to settle in the village about which clung all my sweetest and holiest thoughts; to buy there a little land, to tread the old paths, ramble in the same woods, look upon the same scenes, dwell among the same people, re-make a home in the same place. But now—? Could it be?

As I walked back to my lodgings, through the street and by the market place, folk were hurrying in all directions, some with bunches of holly in their hands, a girl or two with a sprig of mistletoe slyly hid in her muff, a man wheeling a Christmas tree on a barrow, butchers' boys carrying joints for the morrow's dinner. Plum puddings and mince pies were displayed in the confectioners' shops. The chemist, the hatter, the seedsman, the draper had stuffed their windows with toys, toys, toys. He who had come to earth as a little child had filled every heart with thought of the little ones, and desire to make Christmas a day of joy to them. I had no tiny ones of my own, no little nieces and nephews, no small cousins for whom to provide anything. I was alone—utterly, desolately alone.

As I pursued my way I saw a tall, slim girl walking before me with a basket on her arm, and I noticed that the bottom had come out, and that the contents fell on the pavement. Of this she was unaware. I stooped and picked up a little woolly lamb, then—a something wrapped in paper—then a silver match box breaking out of its covering.

Gathering them together, I ran after the girl and stopped her.

"Excuse me," said I. "Are you a female Hop o' my Thumb, dropping tokens whereby your track may be known?"

I showed her what I had collected. She colored and thanked me. Then I recognized her as the daughter of my landlady.

"You must allow me," said I, "to tie my handkerchief round the basket, and to carry it for you. I believe that we go the same way."

"You are very good," she replied. "We are about to have a Christmas tree for the children this evening, and I have been making some trifling purchases as presents for my brothers and sisters, and for papa and mamma, who must not be forgotten."

"There go the candles!" I exclaimed, as a catarract of red, yellow and green tapers shot out of the basket.

"And there's an orange!" said she, as one of these fruit bounced forth and fell, and rolled away into the gutter.

We were forced to stoop and collect the scattered wax lights, and then to tie my large handkerchief about the basket.

"What a fortunate thing," said I, "that I have got a good sized kerchief in place of one of the miserable little rags that do service nowadays. That is, because I cling to old customs, and when I was a boy my mother always gave me something like a dish-cloth in my pocket."

Then we proceeded on our way, and when we went into the house, she received the basket from me, and again thanked me. "You must not remove the kerchief till all is unpacked," I said, "or there will be another discharge of the contents; and then the children will see what you have provided for them."

"Shall you be dining out to-morrow?" asked the girl.

"I—oh, no! I have none to dine with. I know no one here."

"And this evening, shall you be going anywhere?"

"I—oh, no! I have nowhere whither to go."

So we parted, and I ascended to my room. I made up the fire, and sat down and read the newspaper. There was much in it about the ap-

proaching feast. I had the illustrated papers. They had issued Christmas supplements, with pictures of happy family gatherings, of Old Father Christmas, of waits and carol singers. I might perhaps hear the waits and singers. I should certainly hear the Christmas bells. That would be all.

I had done with my papers. I sat before the fire in a brown study, and my spirits sank lower and ever lower. I recalled the old Christmases I had spent at home with my parents. I remembered how I had looked into my stockings on the morning to see if Old Father Christmas had visited me in the night and had left there some presents for the good boy.

Alas! No Father Christmas would visit me now. All that was of the past—the utterly and irrevocably past.

I did not light my candles. I could read no more. I needed no light for my thoughts, they were too dark to be illumined thus.

As I stood thus musing, I heard a tap at my door, and shouted: "Come in!" There ensued delay, and I called again: "Come in!"

Then the door opened and I saw some little heads outside, with golden curls and flushed cheeks, and a child's voice said: "Please, Mr. What's-your-name, will you come to our tree downstairs?"

"I—I!"

As I hesitated, the child said: "Please—Annie told us to ask you." And then I saw the tall girl whom I had assisted draw back into the dark behind them.

"Most certainly I will, as you are so kind as to invite me."

So I descended, and there were my landlord and landlady, radiant with happiness, and the five children danced before me and said: "He is come; is it not nice?" Behind, presently, entered Annie, somewhat shyly, and pretending she had come from the kitchen.

I was witness of the delight of the little ones over their presents—the woolly lamb, a small cart, a cannon, a doll—the father over a pair of warm stockings of Annie's, knitting, the mother over a shawl, also of her

work; and I stood smiling and happy, when up sprang one of the children and plucked from the tree the silver match box.

"This," said the child, "is for Mr. What's-his-name. Sister Annie said it was for him."

I was moved more than I can say. So—some had been thinking of me, though I was only a lodger.

"Look here, sir!" said the father, "you're a stranger in the country, and at such a time as this there must be no strangers. You must really sup with us, and dine also with us to-morrow. I can promise you a good dinner, for it is of Annie's making."

All was changed. I was a stranger and they took me in; I was lonely and they made of me a friend.

Christmas day, 10:30 p. m.

I returned to my room upstairs, made up the fire, and seated myself before it. I had spent a very pleasant day, and a pleasant evening before that. I did not now feel so discouraged, so hopeless. That was a nice family, very friendly and considerate. And I began to build in the fire. I no longer saw only ruins. I saw, as it were, a pleasant home rise out of the coals, and a pleasing face looked up at me out of them—very much like that of Annie. Ah! if the old home was gone, might I not build one that would be new. I need no longer live in the past, but look to the future, and next Christmas, please God—I would not be alone, that is if Annie—but I cannot say—will consent to put an end to my loneliness and help in building up a future.

Of interest to Stockholders.

Jasper—I hear that Santa Claus has given up his yearly rounds.

Jumpuppe—You don't tell me!

Jasper—Yes. He has accepted a regular position on the "Salaries Committee" of various big corporations.

—Town Topics.

A Holiday Reflection.

"A Christmas tree is a good deal like a wife."

"How's that?"

"It's the trimmings that cost."—Chicago Record-Herald.

THE TRUE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT



TO GET THE BEST EFFECTS.

Things Worth Remembering When Having Room Papered.

When about to have a room papered take into consideration the size of the room, the height of the ceiling and the number and arrangement of the windows, as well as the use to which the room is put and the probable number and kinds of pictures you intend to hang upon the walls.

Small patterns add to the apparent size and are good in a small room. Striped effects give height and should be employed where the ceilings are unduly low. Plain papers are also suitable in small rooms and are best calculated to show off engravings to good advantage.

Where the ceiling is unusually high and a plain paper has been used a dado of a contrasting or harmonizing color, run about the top, just under the ceiling molding, improves matters.

Yellow paper lights up a dark room or one with a northern exposure beautifully. Red paper is charming in a library where the woodwork is dark and too sharp a contrast to the dingy covering of many beloved books must be avoided, but it has a tendency toward darkening the room if the windows are not very advantageously arranged.

Green paper combined with white paint is delightful in a sunny room of southern exposure, but green paper is usually a fortunate choice, for it can almost always be made to harmonize with the other furnishings.

Paper carried over the ceiling gives a better effect than if the ceiling is calcimined and adds to the apparent loftiness of the apartment.

SIGNS OF AGE IN POULTRY.

Certain Marks Reveal Everything to Experienced Housewife.

In choosing poultry the age of the bird is the most important point for consideration. When selecting a turkey remember that a young bird has smooth, shiny black legs, whereas those of an old one are rough and reddish. If the bird is freshly killed the eyes are full and bright and the feet moist.

The combs and legs of chickens are smooth in the young fowl, but tough in an old one.

When choosing geese see that the bills and feet are yellow and have few hairs on them. Old birds have a decided red tinge on both. The feet should be pliable when freshly killed, but become dry and stiff if they have been killed some time. Geese are called green until they are two or three months old.

Ducks are chosen by their feet, which should be supple. Wild ducks have reddish feet, while those of the tame duck are yellow. A fresh duck should have a plump hard breast.

Tame pigeons are larger than the wild pigeons and the feet, like those of poultry, show the age of the bird. When the are supple the bird is young; when stiff it is old.

Pigeons should always be eaten while they are fresh; when they look flabby, and discolored about the under part they have been kept too long.

Rainy-Day Closet.

Rainy days often mean trouble in the household where there are plenty of children, and some one has suggested that the mother of such a brood would do well to provide herself with a rainy-day closet.

To it will find their way special playthings reserved for state occasions; pictures, scrapbooks, paste pots, scissors, old magazines and paint boxes. Anything, in fact, that can provide indoor amusement. When the rainy day comes round the closet may be opened and a distribution of its blessings made.

Children delight in novelty, and the very fact that there is a special treat reserved for the days when the sun doesn't shine will go a long way toward alleviating any disappointment over the putting off of out-of-door games and pleasures.

Fugettes.

Melt together one square chocolate and two tablespoonfuls butter measured level. Add two cups granulated sugar and one cup milk. Boil until it forms little balls when dropped in cold water, then stir until nearly hard. Turn on to buttered plates to cool, and when nearly cold mark in squares.

Tunnel Under Chinese Wall.

The Great Wall of China will soon be undermined in one place by a rail way tunnel.

HOW NATIONS DINE CHRISTMAS

Favorite Dishes for Yuletide Dinner in Different Countries.

While all the nations of Christendom celebrate Yuletide by feasting, the banquet varies greatly in different countries. John Bull, as everybody knows, is deeply attached to roast beef and plum pudding, although of late years turkey or goose has to a great extent displaced the stolon.

France feeds more daintily, chicken forming the favorite dish, supplemented by liver pudding rich with truffles and seasoning. The Spanish Christmas dinner includes a soup of sweet almonds and cream, followed by roast fish, seasoned with onion, garlic, and oil. Those valiant trenchermen, the Germans, love heavier fare, and their Yule banquet comprises roast goose, pork, beef, sauerkraut, black pudding and baked apples, accompanied by soups of ale. Russia serves her na-

tional soup made from beef, cabbage, sour cream and beet-roots, and this is frequently followed by sucking pig, a dish which makes its appearance also at the Christmas dinners of the Portuguese.

Grounds for Suspicion.

"Well," asked the lawyer, "what reason have you to suspect that your wife has ceased to care for you?"

"She's trying," the man with the troubled countenance replied, "to

make me consent to play Santa Claus in a suit that she has decorated with bunches of cotton."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Teachers Want Representation.

The Educational Institute, of Scotland, at its annual meeting in Edinburgh, adopted a proposal to raise a fund of \$10,000 to enable the institute to nominate a representative of the teaching profession for parliament.